

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-12 PRS-01 PM-07 NSC-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9738

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

US MISSION USUN NY 1762

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OAU, NI, XF, IS, US

SUBJECT: GOWON RETURNS FROM OAU SUMMIT

REFS: LAGOS 4120; ADDIS ABABA 6433

BEGIN SUMMARY. GENERAL GOWON RETURNED FROM OAU SUMMIT MAY 30 AND MADE AMBIGUOUS COMMENTS TO PRESS AT AIRPORT ABOUT FUTURE OF NIGERIAN RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. ELECTION TO OAU CHAIRMANSHIP MAY SWING FMG POLICY TOWARD LESS CORDIALITY WITH ISRAEL AND TOWARD SOMEWHAT MORE ADVENTUROUS AFRICAN LIBERATION POLICY, BUT WE BELIEVE BASIC MODERATE POLICIES WILL SURVIVE. EXPECTED ADDITIONAL EMPHASIS WITHIN FMG ON AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES ARE LIKELY TO MAKE IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT THAN IN PAST TO GET DECISIONS MADE ON DOMESTIC AND US- NIGERIAN BILATERAL ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

1. GOWON RETURNED LAGOS FROM ADDIS ABABA EVENING MAY 30 TO "HERO'S WELCOME", ACCORDING PRESS. NEWSPAPERS ATSO
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REPORT HE MADE FOLLOWING RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AT
ARRIVAL PRESS CONFERENCE.

2. THREE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING AFRICA NOW, GOWON SIAD,
ARE " IMPERIALIST DOMINATION OF CERTAIN PARTS OF THE
CONTINENT"; MIDDLE EAST, (" THE MOST SERIOUS OF ALL");
AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE FOR ALL AFRICAN STATES.

3. REPORTS DIFFER ON SUBSTANCE AND TONE OF GOWON REPLY
TO QUESTION ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF NIGERIA BREAKING
RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. ACCORDING DAILY TIMES HE SIAD
QUESTION NIGERIA SEVERING RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL " DOES
NOT ARISE", AND THAT NIGERIA WOULD BREAK RELATIONS ONLY
WITH A COUNTRY OPERATING AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF
NIGERIA. BOTH NEW NIGERIAN AND DAILY SKETCH INDICATE
HE TOOK A TOUGHER BUT ODDLY DEFENSIVE LINE, STATING
THAT NIGERIA WOULD BREAK RELATIONS WITH ANY COUNTRY
THAT TREATED AFRICA OR NIGERIA AS " NONENTITIES".
ACCORDING SKETCH, HE ADDED, " IF ISRAEL DOES NOT HEED THE
OAU PLEAS AND ADVICE TO RELINQUISH OCCUPIED ARAB LANDS,
WE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TAKE STEPS WE DEEM FIT" .
NEW NIGERIAN ADDS DIFFERENT QUOTE : " NIGERIA WILL STUDY
THE SITUATION FURTHER BEFORE GOING INTO SWIFT ACTION".

4. ADDITIONAL DEFENSIVE NOTE STRUCK BY GOWON REFERENCE
TO " MISCHIEVOUS FOREIGN NEWS MEDIA WHICH ENGAGE IN
DELIBERATE DISTORTION OF FACTS ABOUT AFRICA AND ITS
ACHIEVEMENTS".

5. PRESS REACTION TO GOWON ELECTION AS CHAIRMAN OF OAU
ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN SMUG. MOST COMMENTARY INDICATES THIS
DEVELOPMENT IS SIMPLY BELATED RECOGNITION BY OTHER
AFRICAN STATES
OF NIGERIA' S PROMINENCE IN CONTINENTAL
AFFAIRS. SOME POINT OUT THAT GOWON IS NOW IN EXCELLENT
POSITION TO MAKE GOOD HIS CONVICTION, EXPRESSED AT 1971
OAU SUMMIT, THAT " WE SHOULD LIBERATE AT LEAST ONE COLONIAL
TERRITORY WITHIN THE NEXT THREE YEARS".

6. COMMENT: WE ATTEMPTING FIND OUT THROUGH ISRAELI EMBASSY
WHAT GOWON DID SAY RE NIGERIAN- ISRAELI RELATIONS. WHILE
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WE BELIEVE FMG PREFERS RETAIN PRESENT CORDIAL
RELATIONSHIP, AND RESENTS LIBYAN PRESSURE (LAGOS 3952),
THERE IS ALWAYS DANGER THAT GOWON WILL TAKE HIS NEW
CHAIRMANSHIP DUTIES LITERALLY AND SERIOUSLY ENOUGH TO
ALLOW OAU ANTI- ISRAEL CONSENSUS TO AFFECT HIS JUDGMENT
ABOUT NIGERIAN- ISRAELI RELATIONS. HIS EXPECTED PRE-
SENTATION AND DEFENSE OF OAU MIDDLE EAST RESOLUTION AT

NEXT UNGA MAY ALSO INHIBIT NIGERIAN- ISRAELI CORDIALITY IN MONTHS AHEAD. WE DO NOT EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT SMALL ISRAELI DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE HERE WILL BE REDUCED OR ELIMINATED. SIMILARLY, PRESTIGE OF CHAIRMANSHIP-- TOGETHER WITH WHAT MAY TURN OUT TO BE EMBARRASSING CALL FOR THREE YEAR LIBERATION TIMETABLE-- MAY ENCOURAGE SOME- WHAT MORE ADVENTUROUS GOWON POLICY ON LIBERATION ISSUES. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE BASIC NIGERIAN INCLINATION WILL CONTINUE TO FAVOR MEASURES THAT ARE REALISTIC AND PROMISE SUCCESS.

7. GOWON' S NEW MARK OF PRESTIGE, COMING JUST BEFORE HIS STATE VISIT TO UK, IS VIEWED AS MINOR WINDFALL BY UK HICOM REPS HERE. THEY CONCEDE, AS FLY IN OINTMENT, THAT GOWON MAY BE EMBOLDENED TO SPEAK MORE LOUDLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY ON RHODESIAN ISSUE AS " REPRESENTATIVE OF AFRICA". GOWON APPEARANCE AT NEXT UNGA NOW APPEARS MOST LIKELY.

8. GOWON' S CHAIRMANSHIP IS LIKELY TO ADD EMPHASIS TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS WITHIN FMG, STRAINING ALREADY BURDENED BUREAUCRATIC FACILITIES ON DOMESTIC FRONT. WE EXPECT DECISIONS ON DOMESTIC AND US- NIGERIAN BILATERAL ISSUES WILL SUFFER EVEN LONGER DELAYS THAN IN PAST.
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